

DEPARTMENTAL REGULATION		Number: 3130-004
SUBJECT: Parallel Review Process and Trail Boss Program	DATE: August 3, 1989	
	OPI: Agency Technical Services Division, OIRM	

1 PURPOSE

To inform agencies of the Parallel Review Process, the Trail Boss Program and their implementation within the Department of Agriculture for obtaining Departmental Technical Approval (TA) for acquisition of IRM products and services.

2 REFERENCES

a FIRMR Bulletin 55, May 23, 1988. The Attachments to the bulletin are included as a part of this regulation.

b Departmental Regulation 3130-1, Technical Approval for IRM Products and Services.

c Departmental Regulation 3300-1, Telecommunications.

3 BACKGROUND

The General Services Administration initiated the "Go For 12" Program in 1986. Its purpose was to research ways to speed up the acquisition of IRM products and services. It had three analysis projects: Bottlenecks in Procurement Parallel Reviews, and Education and Training. The Parallel Review Project was conducted by the Department for GSA.

The "Go For 12" Program has met its objectives and from it we have the Trail Boss Program which is available for use Government-wide. This program allows selected acquisitions

to proceed through implementation under the management direction of one highly qualified individual. USDA is continuing to use the Parallel Review Process to facilitate the process for review and granting Departmental TA and for gaining authorization to conduct a procurement.

The Parallel Review Process is conducted under the auspices of a multidisciplinary ART. The ART is made up of both agency and oversight organization staff. The ART oversees reviews and may approve, or may recommend approval in three of the seven activities in the Parallel Review Process.

The objectives of the Parallel Review Process and trail Boss Program are the same and are two fold. The first is to speed the acquisition of IRM products and services. The second is to improve the quality of IRM resources being acquired to meet USDA needs over time - a life cycle.

These objectives are achieved in several ways. The first is by early and continuous involvement of oversight organization staff members. Their cooperative efforts to facilitate the acquisition of needed resources according to open competition and regulations is essential. The vesting of the acquisition leadership in one person from start to system-use provides needed continuity and control. Finally, a high level management visibility and support is required.

4 POLICY

a Departmental TA means OIRM approves:

(1) Concepts and strategy of the acquisition as proposed to meet agency needs. All kinds of acquisitions are covered including cooperative and interagency agreements in addition to procurements. Also subject to approval is the information architecture and over all system design.

(2) Congruence of the acquisition with agency long range plans, OMB Circular A-11 reports and with Department or external bodies' long range plans.

(3) Adherence to Departmental and Federal regulations and standards

including those for portability and interoperability.

(4) Appropriate and cost effective use of IRM technology to meet agency needs with prudent use of public funds. An acquisition cost is approved. A life cycle cost is also identified.

(5) Ability of agency IRM function to perform the acquisition and use the resources effectively. This includes acceptance of the qualifications of a proposed Trail Boss, the related charter and the APR subject to the Trail Boss providing information as set out in the Parallel Review Process.

b All proposed IRM acquisitions needing Departmental Technical Approval must be reviewed for approval using the Parallel Review Process. They must meet Departmental TA requirements in DR-3130-1. Requests for voice communication systems and networks (local, metropolitan and wide area), both new and modifications to existing systems, must comply with telecommunications policy in DR 3300-1. Also, all procurements requiring a DPA from GSA require Departmental TA.

c All Trail Boss acquisitions will be selected and approved from projects slated for or initiated under the Parallel Review Process. Once approved, they will be conducted under a modified Parallel Review Process. A Trail Boss acquisition may or may not involve GSA. USDA may have internal Trail Boss acquisitions. The USDA acquisition will follow the requirements-of the GSA program.

5 ABBREVIATIONS

- a APR - Agency Procurement Request.
- b ART - Acquisition Review Team.
- c DPA - Delegation of Procurement Authority.

- d FIRMR - Federal Information Resources Management Regulation.
- e GSA - General Services Administration.
- f IRM - Information Resources Management.
- g OGC - Office of General Counsel.
- h OIRM - Office of Information Resources Management.
- i OMB - Office of Management and Budget.
- j 00 - Office of Operations.
- k RFC - Request for Comment.
- l RFI - Request for Information.
- m SES - Senior Executive Service.
- n TA - Technical Approval.

6 DEFINITIONS

a Acquisition. Bringing in to the USDA inventory an IRM resource by any means, e.g., purchase, lease, transfer.

b Acquisition Cost. Total expected cost of an IRM resource brought in to the USDA inventory. This may include: contract studies, pilot and prototype testing, consultants, other contracts to help in acquiring IRM resources before the system life of the target system begins; cost of resources needed to meet functional requirements over the system life; all one-time and recurring costs; resources for contractor operation; site construction; software conversion, development and maintenance. This is the total expected cost over a defined life cycle. It is the sum of several categories of costs.

c Agency. Any agency, staff office, independent corporation or other comparable entity within USDA.

d Delegation of Procurement Authority. The official transfer of authority for the legal right to procure products and services according to Government regulation for approved functional requirements.

e IRM Products and services. All aspects of the products and services described as Automatic Data Processing Equipment in PL 99-500. This includes: computers, computer service, computer maintenance, software packages, software development, facilities management, ADP related studies and other services.

f Information Resources Management. The totality of planning, organizing, directing, operating, controlling and evaluating IRM products and services, organizations responsible for them, information and its architecture for meeting organizational functional needs for program delivery.

g Life Cycle. This is made up of 4 phases: Initiation, Development, Operation, and Termination. It begins with the first work on a new system or one to be revised. It continues through acquisition, implementation and operation. It concludes with completed conversion to another system or discard of the old one. The system may be an application or a service or some other form of an IRM product or service,

h Parallel Review Process. This is a method of cooperatively and expediently working out approval for acquisition of needed IRM products or services according to applicable rules. It requires early involvement of oversight organization staff in the acquisition and commitments on their part to help find the most expedient way to get the needed resources. It allows the requesting unit much greater knowledge and participation in the process.

i Request for Comment. This document provides the vendor community an opportunity to give their views on a proposed set of specifications which

may be included in a solicitation document. It is issued by a contracting officer.

j Request for Information. This document requests from the vendor community information on their abilities, and ideas for meeting certain functional specifications. It is issued by a contracting officer.

k Senior IRM Official. The one individual in an agency who is responsible for the information resource management across the entire agency.

l System Life. The planned duration for an IRM resource to be used beneficially by USDA. It begins with the acceptance of the resource for operation and ends with equipment release, software conversion or discard, or service termination.

m Technical Approval. The acceptance by OIRM of all technical and managerial aspects of a proposed acquisition, its implementation and its operation within or for USDA.

n Trail Boss. This is the name of a program developed by GSA to speed up acquisition of IRM resources and to improve the quality of items acquired. It vests in one well qualified and, organizationally, well placed individual the authority and responsibility for conducting a large acquisition through implementation.

7 PROCEDURE

a An agency initiates a Parallel Review Process for an IRM acquisition by notifying OIRM in writing of the planned acquisition. This notification should occur at the earliest possible time after the need is apparent. The best time to start-it is at submission of the agency Long Range IRM Plan or at the submission of the OMB Circular A-11 reports. It should occur no later than at the start of the requirements analysis (feasibility study). If the acquisition is desired to be done under the Trail Boss Program, that may be included in the notice.

b OIRM sets up the oversight agency members of the ART while the agency continues with the acquisition planning and approval process. The ART is comprised of requesting unit personnel and Departmental staff office personnel representing technical IRM (including information management analysts), contracting competition advocate, and small business interests.

Also included on the team is an OGC attorney, and other interested oversight staff. A representative from GSA is included when a DPA from them is needed.

It is headed by a GS/GM-14 or 15, Agency Senior IRM Official, or SES level person. It is advantageous for this person to represent the legislative program area for which the IRM products and services are required. This person is the ART Facilitator.

The agency may also provide a Project Manager to be the action officer. A Recorder is required to document the review meetings, manage acquisition documents and to make distributions of them to the ART members.

c The Parallel Review Process uses seven activities and representatives from oversight organizations to cooperatively guide, review, and approve an agency's acquisition process up to the procurement function. An overview of the seven activities follows:

- (1) Form the ART, ACTIVITY 1. Up to 10 working days are allowed for this task. The oversight unit team members are arranged for by OIRM.

- (2) Review Concepts and Strategies, ACTIVITY 2. This review is held at least 10 working days after ART members receive the first documentation. There are only two documents required and both are subject to change during the process. Hence they are only draft documents. They are: Form AD-834 with

signature of the program manager and an APR. The APR is defined in FIRMR 201-23-106-2. Both of these documents may be revised for any of the other two reviews. All ART members must give approval by signing an Acquisition Review Team Concurrence Record before the next review activity (ACTIVITY 4) may be started.' Other work may continue at the agency's discretion, however, if all signatures are not obtained at once.

(3) Agency Plans and Conducts Studies, ACTIVITY 3. The requirements analysis and analysis of alternatives (feasibility study), the benefit cost analysis, implementation plan and other needed documents are developed. Other documents may include a software conversion study, 8(a) acquisition agreements, and justification for other than full and open competition. if an RF1 or an RFC is to be issued at this or at a later time, the document should be provided to the ART for review with at least 10 working days for that review.

(4) Review Plans and Studies, ACTIVITY 4. At least ten working days after each ART member receives a copy of the plans, studies and updates to earlier documents, the review meeting is held. All members must give approval by signing an Acquisition Review Team Concurrence Record before the next review activity (ACTIVITY 6) may be started. Other work may continue at the agency's discretion, however, if all signatures are not obtained at once.

(5) Acquisition Definition and Agency Internal Review, ACTIVITY 5. The solicitation, statement of work,

delivery order or other acquisition document is developed. It is provided at least 15 working days prior to the start of the next review (ACTIVITY 6) for comment by the ART.

The concepts and strategy for the Live Test Demonstration, Capability Demonstration, Benchmark or other physical system exercising test are developed. Also, at least a draft of the evaluation plan should be developed.

Internal agency reviews should be made to insure enlightened management decisions on all aspects of the acquisition and its implementation.

(6) Final Review and Assign Procurement Authority. The documents developed in ACTIVITY 5 plus any prior ones being revised are provided in FINAL FORM for the 10 day review. The review meeting is scheduled at the end of the time.

All team members must sign an Acquisition Review Team Concurrence Record if all requirements are met and all aspects of the acquisition are acceptable. These signatures signify that the oversight members are on record for having fully coordinated the acquisition with their management and now are recommending to their management the acquisition be approved officially. The official approval comes in the form of several required memoranda. These are to be signed by the proper authority within the next 5 working days.

The required memoranda include the TA memo, the memo conveying the APR to GSA, the GSA DPA to USDA, the DPA from Office of Operations to the agency, if

the acquisition is to be done by the agency. The two memoranda involving GSA are not required if GSA DPA is not required. The OGC should be able to complete their legal review within this 15 working day period of time. The Facilitator is responsible for walking the memoranda through the channels.

(7) Conduct the Acquisition. Final arrangements are made for the acquisition. This includes issuing the Commerce Business Daily notice, solicitation document plus preparing the instructions for and finalizing the evaluation plan for the technical proposal, cost document and physical system exercising testing. The acquisition is executed.

d If a Trail Boss acquisition is requested, the Trail Boss would be the ART Facilitator for the Parallel Review Process. The proposed acquisition should meet the criteria outlined in Attachment C of FIRMR Bulletin 55. The Parallel Review Process is followed except:

(1) During the ART formulation (ACTIVITY 1) or first Parallel Review (ACTIVITY 2), the Trail Boss statement of qualifications and charter will also be submitted for review and approval. The approval of all of these documents by OIRM will also yield the TA for the acquisition. However, approval by Departmental Administration is required before submission of the documents to GSA. The charter, qualifications and APR may require additional time for approval. The Parallel Review Process may continue while waiting for that approval. Its approval requirements are superceded when the Trail Boss request is approved. The ART members from oversight organizations will be available for consulting.

(2) The second Parallel Review meeting (ACTIVITY 4) will not require approvals for continued progress of the acquisition if the Trail Boss request is approved. The ART members from oversight organizations will be available for consulting.

(3) The third Parallel Review meeting (ACTIVITY 6) will require no approvals from the ART except from OGC. The ART members from oversight organizations will be available for consulting.

The following required actions are taken in part from FIRMR Bulletin 55 and its attachments. Documents resulting from these actions are submitted by the agency for approval at the time of the Trail Boss request.

(1) The Trail Boss candidate should meet the criteria outlined in Attachment B. Additionally, he or she must be at a management level sufficient in stature to deal effectively with oversight and regulatory activities. The statement of qualifications outlined in Attachment D must be assembled.

(2) The Trail Boss must report to and receive a charter from a senior official within the Department or, upon delegation from OIRM, an agency. The contents of the charter are set forth in Attachment A. The proposed charter is reviewed by OIRM, 00 and other interested Departmental units. Following Departmental approval, the charter, statement of qualifications and APR are reviewed by GSA, if required. The APR must include the information noted in Attachment E.

8 INQUIRIES

For detailed information on the Parallel Review Process and the Trail Boss Program, contact the Agency Technical Services Division, OIRM at 447-3456 (FTS or commercial with 202-).

FIRMR Bulletin 55

Attachment A

CONTENTS OF THE TRAIL BOSS CHARTER

(To be submitted with an Agency Procurement Request)

- a. Purpose. state the purpose as it relates to an agency acquisition.
- b. Trail Boss Status and Line of Authority.'
Describe the scope of authority of the Trail Boss, the reporting structure for the Trail Boss and the acquisition support team (paragraph d, below), and the relationship of the Contracting Officer to the Trail Boss. Include access paths to upper management, and mechanisms for coordinating the functions of program, technical, procurement, and contractor personnel, and of other permanent and temporary team members.
- c. Designation of Trail Boss Program Participants and Delineation of Authority. Describe the responsibility and authority of the Trail Boss as it pertains to the overall acquisition and to the procurement in particular. Specify the anticipated length of time that the Trail Boss and support team designations will remain in effect, and procedures to replace' team members in the event of vacancies.

d. Acquisition Support Team. Define the role of the acquisition support team that will support the Trail Boss. Describe the composition of this team in terms of required positions and skills (e.g., technical, contracting, clerical, administrative, budget, legal, etc.). Specify the type and extent of peripheral support required and the source of that support.

e. Responsibilities of the Trail Boss. Delineate the specific roles of the Trail Boss and the Deputy Trail Boss, if applicable. These responsibilities must encompass key activities and functions that the Trail Boss should accomplish.

f. Implementation Strategies. Outline any implementation strategies, including innovative concepts for implementing a Trail Boss assignment.

FIRMR
Bulletin
55

Attachmen
t B

QUALIFICATIONS AND
CONSIDERATIONS FOR

SELECTING THE TRAIL
BOSS

a. Qualifications. The Trail Boss should have the following knowledge, experience, and education:

(1) Significant Federal experience with at least one major systems acquisition and knowledge of Federal and agency acquisition policies and practices;

(2) Appropriate technical knowledge relevant to the system acquisition proposed for the Trail Boss Program, knowledge of life cycle management, and experience in installing a major system;

(3) Program experience relevant to the acquisition;

(4) Knowledge of basic management principles (planning, directing, controlling, organizing) and experience with their application;

(5) Knowledge of Federal and agency budget policies and procedures;

(6) Knowledge of project management strategies, and experience in managing a major technical project; and

(7) Sufficient procurement experience to have a positive impact on the acquisition.

b. Considerations for Selecting a Trail Boss. Review of the following factors may help to identify candidates and select the Trail Boss:

(1) Number of recent years of management experience in information systems;

(2) Approximate percentage of such experience *in line* management positions designing, implementing, operating or maintaining major information systems;

(3) Degree of understanding of the agency's program and mission requirements;

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CRITERIA FOR ACQUISITIONS UNDER THE
TRAIL BOSS PROGRAM

- a. The acquisition should be in the early conceptual or needs determination stage at the time of request for participation in the Program.
- b. The acquisition must be competitive.
- c. The acquisition must be critical to the agency's mission.
- d. The acquisition should be included in the agency's five-year plan.
- e. The acquisition must have the support of senior program, technical, and procurement officials.

FIRMR
Bulletin
55

Attachment
D

STATEMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS OF THE
TRAIL BOSS

(To be submitted with an Agency
Procurement Request)

- a. List the name, position title, and organizational identity of the Trail Boss and Deputy Trail Boss(es), if applicable.
- b. Outline their experience and education with major information technology acquisitions.
- c. Describe planned education or training that will provide the Trail Boss and/or Deputy Trail Boss(es) with additional necessary knowledge and skills to accomplish the Trail Boss assignment.

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CONTENTS OF AN APR SUBMITTED UNDER THE TRAIL BOSS PROGRAM

a. Agency Information. Provide agency name, address, primary location of the system, and the position title and organizational identity of the Trail Boss responsible for and authorized to conduct the acquisition.

b. Program Title and Description. Provide the program title and a brief but specific description of the major agency program(s) that the Trail Boss acquisition will support; a brief but specific description of the current major system components or services supporting the program; and a general description of the major elements required to support the program during its systems life.

c. Estimated System Life and Cost. Provide the estimated overall cost of the acquisition to include all aspects over its system life. (The delegation of authority resulting from this submission will cover the estimated costs over the life of the system.)

d. Major Milestones. Provide a schedule indicating the projected completion of major milestones for the life of the acquisition.

e. Regulatory Compliance. Provide a statement which indicates that the agency will comply with all applicable regulations or will obtain the appropriate deviations from regulations that apply to this acquisition.

- f. Agency Remarks. Provide additional information concerning any of the above items or other special conditions associated with the acquisition as necessary for understanding the APR.
- g. References. Provide references to relevant past GSA guidance, meetings, briefings, and telephone discussions concerning this acquisition.
- h. Agency Signature. An official authorized by the agency's designated senior official must sign the APR.

Notes: 1. The Trail Boss Charter and the Statement of Qualifications of the Trail Boss must be submitted with the APR.

2. Delegations of Procurement Authority given by GSA under the Trail Boss Program represent authorized individual deviations from regulatory procedures for obtaining procurement authority from GSA.